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INSIDE



Boosted Sales

Consumers in the Northern Marianas have developed a preference for name-branded beef products due to the prevailing food scare brought on by the mad cow disease in the U.S.

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New Iraqi Constitution

For an hour anyway, Iraqi leaders put aside their disagreements during the signing of a landmark interim constitution Monday, heaping praise on the U.S.-backed document amid patriotic songs and Quranic verses urging unity.

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'Twisted' Judd

Ashley Judd has the face that launched a thousand conventional women-in-jeopardy movies—not just her own, which usually depend on Judd's push and drive for their ratcheting momentum, but the rip-offs on TV, often on the Lifetime Channel.

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'Start submerged lands talks'

Task force cites Section 902 as forum for talks

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

Local officials and private groups have formed a task force that asked Gov. Juan N. Babauta yesterday to initiate negotiations with the federal government to settle the dispute over the ownership

of submerged lands in the CNMI.

The task force, chaired by Rota Mayor Benjamin Manglona, said the proper forum to address the dispute is the Section 902 negotiations.

Section 902 of the Covenant provides that the CNMI Governor or the U.S. President may initiate negotiations on issues affecting the relationship between

the Commonwealth and the U.S.

This developed after the U.S. District Court temporarily stayed its ruling that declared the federal government's jurisdiction over approximately 264,000 square miles of submerged lands on the islands.

The CNMI's appeal before the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit,

however, continues, with Assistant Attorney General Joseph Taijeron Jr. disclosing yesterday that federal attorneys had requested for an extension to file the U.S. government's brief before the appellate court. Supposedly, the U.S. government's deadline to file its brief fell on March 8.

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Shell raises gas price by 5 cents a gallon

By JOHN RAVELO
REPORTER

Shell gas stations on Saipan raised their prices of gasoline by 5 cents a gallon beginning Monday night—the second time that Shell hiked its gas price this year.

Including Shell's 7-cent price hike in January, the price increases by the company now total 12 cents a gallon so far this year.

Shell stations now peg the price of regular gasoline at \$2.229 per gallon, and that of premium gasoline at \$2.329 per gallon.

Shell Marianas president Phil Stalker differentiated the price hikes in January and that of last Monday.

"It [new price hike] has to do with recovering an increase in cost of freight," Stalker said. In January, Stalker said market forces triggered the increase in pump prices, citing tight supply. He also cited the strong demand from Japan and China in the Singapore market as another factor that pushed prices up.

At least two freight companies—Matson and Horizon Lines—recently announced increasing their fuel surcharge. Matson reportedly cited that fuel price increases had raised its operating costs, prompting the firm to raise its fuel surcharge.

Taxi operator Ashik Mahmud lamented the new price increase when he

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Norita: No need to contract private firm

By MARIAN A. MARAYA
REPORTER

The chairman of the House Committee on Federal and Foreign Relations made known yesterday his disapproval over the administration's decision to contract out the development of the CNMI's Homeland Security Strategic Plan to a private firm for the price of \$400,000.

Rep. Clyde K. Norita said during a session yesterday that grant writing is an undertaking that the CNMI government is capable of doing in-house through its pool of grant writers and administrators.

The congressman, a former grants

writer/administrator/manager, specifically objected to the price of the contract that the government signed with the Federated Sector Enterprises, whose managing partner is Danny Aranza.

"We don't need an outside contract...in that amount," Norita told fellow House members yesterday.

He was mainly concerned over reports that the homeland security plan was rejected, which would have translated to a \$5.8 million loss to the CNMI for this fiscal year.



Norita

Reached for comment, governor's press secretary Peter A. Callaghan said the price of the contract was well justified in that the services of professionals were needed to develop a comprehensive plan that could translate in tens of millions of dollars for the Commonwealth in the next five years.

"These people that the government hired are experts in homeland security issues. Many of them are retired military [people] who worked in disaster prepared-

See NORITA on Page 8

House approves \$1.8M funding for classrooms

By MARIAN A. MARAYA
REPORTER

The measure appropriating \$1.86 million mainly to alleviate overcrowding in Kagman public schools was approved by the House yesterday on a vote of 16 to one.

Rep. Arnold I. Palacios, who disagreed with the \$700,000-cut against

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Local

Sablan: Desalinated water is cheaper

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

Reiterating his support for the desalination project, Commonwealth Utilities Corp. board chairman Herman P. Sablan believes that desalinated water would be cheaper than the current commercial water.

He said that, given the original proposed rate of \$8 per 1,000 gallons by Taekwang Heavy Industries, plus some administrative costs of \$2 to \$3,

residents would be paying \$11 to \$12 per 1,000 gallons.

"I would definitely prefer paying \$11 to \$12 for desalinated water than pay \$60 per delivery of 1,000 gallons water [from commercial companies]. People should look at that," said Sablan.

He said the \$60 rate per 1,000 gallons or \$30 per 500 gallons "is [still] happening."

Sablan said the CUC management continues to negotiate with Taekwang on water rates.

"I left that issue with the management. There's no report to the board so far," he said.

A CUC team earlier selected Taekwang as the most responsive proposer to build a 3-million gallon a day desalination plant in Lower Base.

This, despite warnings from different agencies following findings of alleged irregularities in the project solicitation process and suspicions of board interference.

Sablan, in previous inter-

views, maintained that CUC used the correct procurement process.

The Office of the Public Auditor, in a preliminary report released in late 2003, said it found that CUC's actions in handling the project were "tainted and flawed to a significant degree."

OPA cited that a July 9, 2003 pre-RFP agreement between the CUC board chairman and Taekwang "destroys the concept of a valid, competitive, and unbiased RFP, as required by

both CUC and the CNMI Procurement Regulations." OPA had advised the CUC to cancel the project.

The previous House Committee on Public Utilities, Transportation, and Communications also made the same recommendation after an initial review.

The Attorney General's Office had advised the CUC against proceeding with the project negotiation until further analysis. To avoid an appearance of impropriety, the AGO

had then suggested that CUC communicate with three other bidders: Mitsui USA, GET Inc., and Telesource—which offered lower rates than Taekwang.

Taekwang's draft contract proposes to sell 3 million gallons of water to CUC at \$7.98 per 1000 gallons a day or some \$136 million in 15 years.

Taekwang officials, while expressing willingness to negotiate their rate, had justified that the amount covers other items not listed under the RFP.

IUMC buys toys for domestic violence shelter

Guma' Esperansa's Domestic Violence Shelter provides safe shelter for women affected by domestic violence. Many are mothers with children who escape to this safe haven at Guma' Esperansa, a service of Karidat. They often arrive with only the clothes on their back, and certainly without toys.

Immanuel United Methodist Church member Mary Prator and Pastor Bud Carroll recently accompanied Sister Carol from

Guma' Esperansa to pick out toys she found suitable. These were mainly large climbing toys, such as plastic slides, riding cars and board games made possible by a special offering from IUMC members.

Sister Carol recently spoke at the Church's United Methodist Women's group. She confirmed what many already suspected: that domestic violence affects many women of all religions, non-religions, and all nationalities.

"The children have particular needs because their usual routines have been disrupted by the domestic violence that brought their mothers to the shelter. In fleeing to Guma' Esperansa to escape the danger of further abuse, children's normal activities are disrupted. Being in a new place, without their familiar surroundings including their favorite toy, can cause great difficulties for already traumatized children who now



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Immanuel United Methodist Church member Mary Prator and Sister Carol from Guma' Esperansa pose with the toys the church donated to the Domestic Violence Shelter.

PTC-CAPRICCIOSA

don't understand what is happening. Although happy to have escaped the immediate danger to their mothers and happy to be in a loving and safe shelter, the children have an urgent need for appropriate outlets for their physical and emotional fright and energy. Hence, the need for the appropriate toys," Sister Carol told UMW.

The children don't leave the safety of the shelter until the most urgent issues are resolved. When it becomes safe, they return to school. However, often there is a lapse of one to three

days between the time a family arrives at Guma' Esperansa and the processing of a Temporary Restraining Order preventing the abuser from picking up the children from school. Sometimes there is a similar wait while the police locate and arrest the perpetrator.

"The length [of time] victims stay at the shelter varies from a few hours to many days. While the guidelines are for a stay up to 30 days, the actual time is determined after the staff and victim study all aspects of the case. The women and children

only leave after considering their options, receiving counseling and/or referrals, obtaining restraining orders against the abusers, locating alternate housing, or working out plans for returning home with increased safety," Sister Carol said.

Sister Carol emphasized that women and children affected by domestic violence should not be ashamed or blame themselves. She urged women suffering from domestic violence to contact the Victim Hotline at 234-5100.



CARS UNLIMITED

CENTURY
TRAVEL

AMP to honor visiting World War II veterans

People are invited to the Flag Circle-Court of Honor at the American Memorial Park to welcome World War II veterans who fought on Saipan, Tinian and Iwo Jima. The ceremony is slated to begin at 11am today.

On hand as guest speaker will be Saipan Veteran William "Bangs" Tosline, who fought here as a young Marine Corps Corporal, as well as about four other Saipan veterans.

To welcome the veterans will be American Memorial

Park Manager Chuck Sayon, Department of the Interior Representative Jeff Schorr and Gov. Juan Babauta.

The brief ceremony will honor the Saipan veterans with certificates of appreciation and special coins. Wreaths will also be placed at the circle in honor of their fallen comrades.

The veterans are currently on island touring Saipan and Timian, later they will be joining the group in Guam and are scheduled to fly to Iwo Jima next week.

Police probes robbery incident

A 28-year-old woman sustained minor cuts and bruises in different parts of her body when an unidentified male suspect poked a knife on her neck and fled with her cash and other belongings.

Police spokesperson Sgt. Tom Blas Jr. said the victim, Zhang Huiying, sustained minor cuts and bruises on her knees, face, and neck when the unknown suspect pushed her to the ground around 9pm Sunday in Chalan Laulau.

Police report said the victim was walking along Chalan Laulau near the UCC Corp. when an unidentified male suspect

grabbed her from behind. The suspect, who was armed with a bladed weapon, stuck the knife on the victim's neck and demanded money from her.

The suspect then threw the victim to the ground, grabbed her wallet out of her pants' pocket, and fled the scene. The victim sustained a small cut on the neck and bruises when she struck the pavement.

According to the victim, her wallet contained \$70 in cash and several identification cards. She immediately reported the incident to the Department of Public Safety. Investigation is ongoing. (*Edith G. Alejandro*)

Crime Stoppers seeks help in two poker robbery incidents

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

The NMI Crime Stoppers is seeking people's help in solving two recent poker game room robberies; in one of the incidents, the suspect carted off \$4,000.

Crime Stoppers coordinator Sgt. Tom Blas Jr. urged people who may know something of the two incidents to call the anti-crime group.

"We urge individuals who may have information about these two robbery incidents. The NMI Crime Stoppers pays a reward for information leading to an arrest," said Blas.

The first incident transpired in January this year where a lone gun-toting male suspect held up the cashier of Orchid's Poker game room in Garapan and fled with his \$4,000 loot.

According to the initial investigation report, the game room cashier was inside her booth calculating her funds when a medium-built man, 5'7" tall, entered the establishment and began playing on one of the machines.

After several minutes, the suspect approached her and claimed that there was a problem with the machine. As the cashier exited the booth and proceeded to assist the suspect, the man pulled out a black handgun and demanded her to turn over all her money.

CPA can adjust PFC rate in due time

By EDITH G. ALEJANDRO
REPORTER

The Commonwealth Ports Authority disclosed yesterday that the proposed \$4.50 Passenger Facility Charge can be adjusted in due time if it meets the projected 2-percent revenue growth in the next 10 years.

CPA executive director Carlos H. Salas explained that, based on the study conducted by Ricondo and Associates, there is a projected 2-percent growth in tourist traffic in the next 10 years, thus the revenue expected to be generated from the Passenger Facility Charge would also increase after the initial implementation.

Because of this increase,

Salas said the possibility of adjusting the PFC would not be farfetched since CPA has the capacity to adjust the rate, depending on the revenue collection.

"If the amount of revenue goes up, we are in the position to adjust the fee down. The projection is very conservative. But if it gets better we would adjust the fee down definitely," he added.

The PFC is similar to the terminal fee that is collected from all outbound passengers.

Salas said that Guam has been implementing the PFC for at least six years now and Honolulu airport is in the process of enforcing the terminal fee collection. Further, the CPA chief stressed that almost all

U.S. airports are collecting terminal fees.

"If you are going to mainland U.S. and you would have stopovers in several airports, passengers would only have to pay two airports. If you are departing from Saipan, you will pay a terminal fee in Guam and Honolulu and the rest of the trips would be covered," he explained.

The Passenger Facility Charge is a fee that would soon be implemented and collected from all outbound passengers in all CNMI airports. A conservative projection made by Ricondo and Associates stated that the CNMI would generate \$2.3 million from the project.

The CPA is now waiting for the recommendations and com-

ments of all signatory airlines serving the CNMI airports. The ports authority met with airline representatives early this month to discuss the implementation of the PFC.

Under the proposal, \$4.50 would be collected from departing passengers, with airline companies collecting the fee through sold airline tickets.

The PFC is still under negotiation but CPA has given all signatory airlines serving the Commonwealth up to March 23 to submit their recommendations and comments on the project.

This, as the ports authority looks into the concerns raised by several airline firms on the possible exemption of inter-island travelers from the fee.

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Opinion

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EDITORIAL

Olympic race against time

After seven years of planning, feuding and working, with barely 159 dawns left before the summer Olympics opens in Athens, 24 of the 39 new athletic venues for the world's oldest games are not yet complete. Oops. According to The Times' Alan Abrahamson, this embarrassing backlog also includes the Olympic stadium where August's opening ceremonies are tied thematically to the vast roof, which does not exist yet.

The Olympics are a fascinating social, political and economic phenomenon that happens to involve athletics. Suggested by the Oracle of Delphi 2,780 years ago as a PR gimmick to interrupt the cycle of wars among Greek city-states with a regular cycle of athletic combat, the Games have ever since been much more than games. They've become global entertainment, construction challenges, economic engines, tourism opportunities, propaganda platforms.

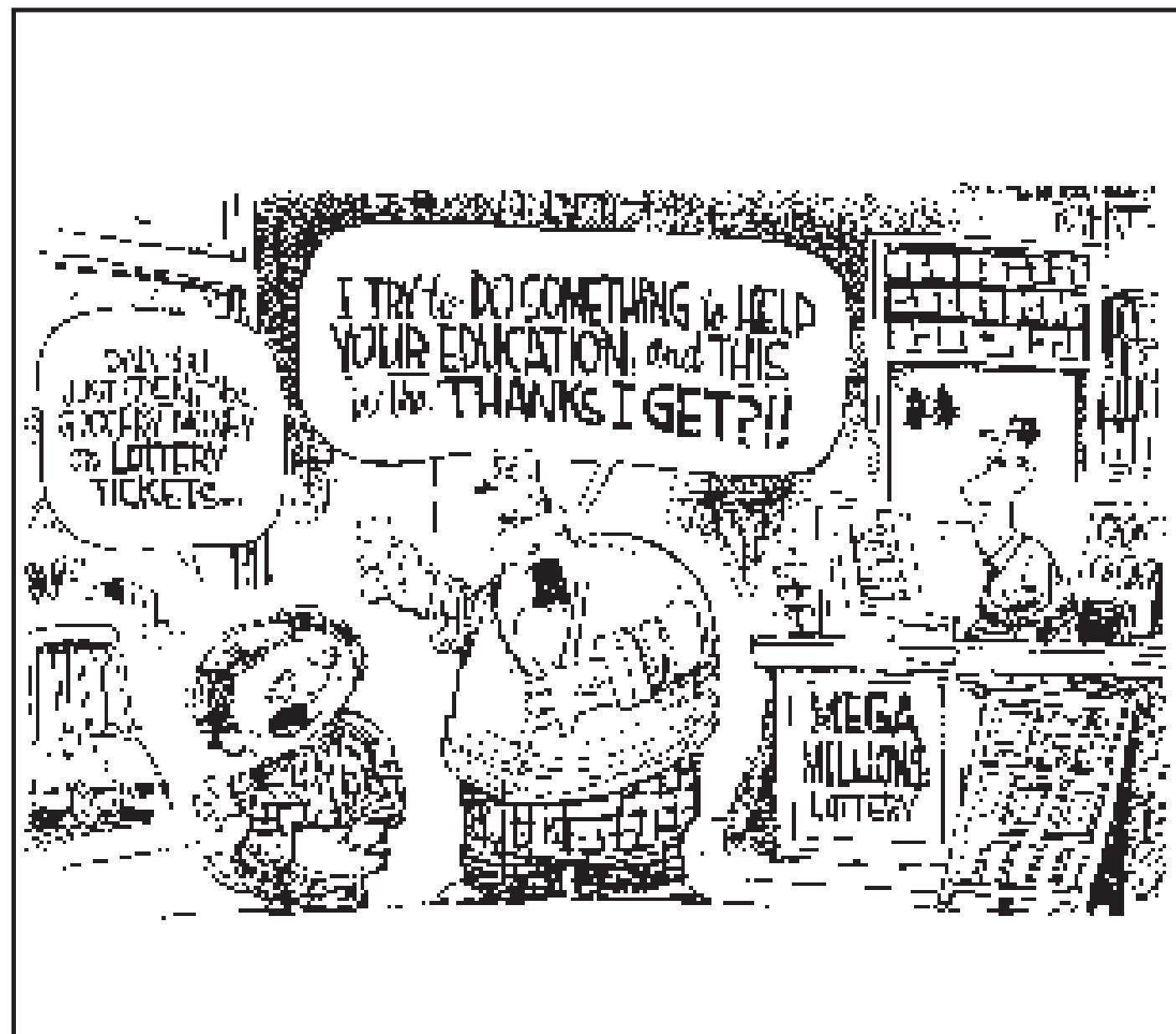
Besides assembling the world's greatest amateur athletes under an idealistic anthem of fellowship, they focus the world's attention on positive achievements for at least 17 days, especially if they increase a certain nation's medal count. The Games have become billion-dollar bonanzas for broadcast empires and enriching opportunities for victorious competitors. Even when confronting judging scandals and banned performance-enhancing stealth drugs, the Games reflect the priorities, dreams, rivalries, conniving, fears and foibles of their times.

This time, the Games also seem to reflect the prostration and enduring fractiousness of their founding society, a new member of the European Union. Winning, then constructing and executing an Olympics, is, well, an Olympian task that consumes most of a decade. Greece, which opened the Games' modern era in 1896, was granted the 2004 Games in 1997. The home committee then foundered, reorganized and restarted and has been behind ever since.

A new airport is done, but flying is not yet an Olympic sport. According to Abrahamson's recent report, 12 of the 24 incomplete Olympic structures are less than 90 percent done. New subways have tracks but no operations. Greek officials have yet to even settle on new regulations governing prostitution, which is legal. Another reflection of the times—security—will cost \$2 million every hour.

Greek and Olympic officials, perhaps with no choice, profess confidence that My Big Fat Greek Olympics will be ready on time. It'll be a close finish, always good for ratings. Oh, one other little wrinkle: Greece holds national elections this weekend. Opposition conservatives could win, meaning an unpredictable political housecleaning starts Monday morning—with only 157 dawns left.

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Senate needs shot at redemption after hiring fiasco

After the guilty have been punished and the smoke of public opinion has subsided, many of us have thought that the series of incidents that led to the ghost jobs scandal at the Senate should now be buried and forgotten.

We may have drawn that conclusion too soon.

The reported plan by the Adriano leadership to hire additional full time employees to handle site preparations for Rota and Tinian sessions is much too hard to bear.

This plan makes it apparent that our esteemed legislators have not learned their lesson yet as they seem to think that the people of the CNMI are so feeble-minded as to not sense their disregard for proprietary spending of taxpayer money.

There are other more feasible alternatives to hiring FTEs to set up sessions on the two outer islands. And it should dawn upon our good senators that their constituents expect frugality and conscientious spending habits of them.

If the need is to have staff that would take care of the required logistics, venue preparation, printing and other needs during legislative sessions, it would make more sense to just have existing LB staff on Saipan shuttle to the two islands once a month for those sessions. Even if the sessions last for days each time, it would not cost the government as much as it would with the additional FTEs. Our senators should be reminded that after the ghost employees fiasco, they should all the more be cautious with their hiring practices, especially the kind that may be perceived as political and familial in appearance.

□ □ □ □ □

I must say that my heart bleeds for the many men and women who were gyped of their hard earned money via the alleged fraudulent schemes of officials of Saipan University.

This is not a simple case of fraud and misrepresentation. What the SU officials did to those hapless, unsuspecting victims is robbery of the grandest scale and should be severely dealt with. That the students had to literally scrape the bottom of the bin to come up with the money to pay their way to Saipan and into a supposed bright future makes it all the more disheartening.

Fraudulent, get-rich-quick scams like this—especially if the victims are underprivileged people, whose weakness makes them more

By RAFFY H. ARROYO

The views expressed are strictly that of the author. Arroyo is the business editor of the Saipan Tribune.



susceptible to scam artists—should be condemned in the strongest possible terms.

Considering that most of these people lost their lifetime savings, it should be up to the authorities, both local and federal, to see to it that the perpetrators of this economic crime are punished to the fullest extent of the law.

Without necessarily passing judgment on SU founder Soon Kyung Park's guilt, I think a long jail time would not be sufficient. It is imperative that most if not all of the money be returned with appropriate punitive damages.

How this is to be done is a good question. As much as the local government would want to help these victims, it could not cough out cash to somehow ease their pain. It also remains doubtful if money is readily available from Mr. Park and his cohorts to repay the students.

What the government could do at the very least is to make sure these poor people are given the chance to rebuild their lives. The problem, however, is that some of these people reportedly prefer to just go back to their home country instead of taking on jobs here. This makes the need for a payout all the more urgent and critical.

In my opinion, the Administration has done well by providing the victims the support and means to pursue their case, although as far as the victims are concerned, more has to be done in terms of reparation. It would do better if the Administration gives more focus on this issue if only to make sure it gets addressed as a priority.

This controversy has the potential of further ruining the already much-maligned image of Saipan as a member of the American political family. It is important that this controversy be put to a close fast, equitably and fairly for all concerned.

Martha's case of extreme hubris

She thought she could do what she wanted—in this case, use inside information illegally to spare herself a financial loss—and that she could get away with it. But it ultimately led to her public disgrace.

During her trial and the long buildup to it, I often wondered why Stewart didn't just 'fess up:

"Yes, I got some information that made me think my stocks were going to tank. So I sold them. As a former stockbroker, I knew this was wrong, but for the moment greed got the best of me. And I regret it."

She might have been able to cut a deal with the federal investigators, plead to a misdemeanor, pay a fine, spend a few months in jail and then go back to icing elaborate wedding cakes. It would have been embarrassing, and probably would have hurt her business somewhat. But it would have been nothing like sitting in federal court last week and hearing that she'd been convicted of four felonies.

But Stewart and her stockbroker, Peter Bacanovic, apparently thought they could get away with their little crime. As her lawyer Robert Morville pointed out during the trial, Stewart couldn't have been motivated by money alone to do something that a jury has now said was illegal. The \$45,600 she saved by dumping her ImClone stock was a pittance compared to her total fortune of more than \$1 billion.

But Stewart had built an empire by doing things just so, and was

accustomed to having things her way. She must have thought she could have it in this instance too.

There was also evidence of greed. The wealthy, we have learned from other divas such as Leona Helmsley, are often quite penurious, seeking to claim every dime, to gain every advantage. Perhaps that's what gets them to their station in life. Stewart, we learned during the trial, billed her media company for tens of thousands of dollars for a personal vacation, when she could easily have paid for it herself.

She was also used to enjoying advantages that ordinary folks don't have. Confiding to a pal that she'd received some confidential information about her ImClone stock, she allegedly said, "Isn't it nice to have brokers who tell you those things?"—or words to that effect.

Stewart and Bacanovic—who claimed that he never told her about the imploding stock, and said they had an agreement to sell if it hit a certain low—seemed to be caught up in a private dance. This was their story and they thought if they stuck to it that all would be well.

They were undone by a 28-year-old assistant broker, Douglas Faneuil, who refused to be their fall guy and who never wavered on the stand while telling his version of what really happened.

Stewart is certain to appeal the jury verdict. But analysts are already assessing the potential fallout from her convictions. She is now a convicted felon—and, if the convictions are upheld, she's likely to do jail time. Her reputation has been battered; her company

could be devastated. She might never again be allowed to play a major role in a publicly traded company.

And all because of hubris.

Some people are going to feel sorry for Stewart. But I'm not one of them. I don't think this was a frivolous prosecution or a witch-hunt of a powerful and successful woman. I see it in the light of the numerous corporate scandals that have unfolded in recent years, where CEOs, CFOs, accountants, mutual fund managers, stockbrokers, brokerage firms and banks have used all kinds of skulduggery to play fast and loose with other people's money.

It's important for the rich and well-connected to understand that they're not entitled to an endless array of perks, almost always at someone else's expense.



By **SHERYL MCCARTHY**

Newsday

McCarthy is a Newsday columnist.

Letters to the Editor

Saipan Tribune welcomes contributions. All letters intended for publication must include the writer's name, address and, if possible, fax or telephone number. Letters are edited for space, clarity and fairness.

An open letter to governor, BOE

I have mentioned on more than one occasion the need for the Governor's Office to work with and through the BOE Teacher Rep. in implementing the governor's Initiative within PSS. The BOE Teacher Rep. is the governor's appointee and the proper conduit for the governor to intervene on teachers' behalf. It is my belief that neither office, the governor nor BOE should be attempting to implement a plan for teachers without the input and services of the BOE Teacher Rep.

The BOE Teacher Rep. is the governor's appointee not just to represent teachers but to also assist the governor as a BOE member with his plans for improving the Department of Education. In the absence of a Secretary of Education, the BOE Teacher Rep. is the governor's only legitimate conduit for the governor to affect BOE policy. For the governor and BOE to continue debating issues about teachers without the BOE Teacher Rep. being involved would be contemptuous to teachers now that teachers have a BOE Teacher Rep.

The governor clearly has good intentions and the concerns by BOE are legitimate considering BOE is on the outside looking in—even though BOE chose to be in that position. The BOE Teacher Rep. and the Teacher Rep. panel that I have established is the means for a resolution to the differences between the Governor's Office and BOE. I would like to suggest that true respect be given to teachers by implementing the Governor's Initiatives through the BOE Teacher Rep.

I'm sure that I can be of help in this matter and I look forward to some form of notification to discuss this matter with BOE and the Governor's Office to reach a resolution, in the best interest of all the stakeholders in our education system.

Ambrose M. Bennett

BOE Teacher Rep.

Mallard not extinct

The article on the extinct Mariana Mallard is inconsistent. I recently moved to the United States but prior to moving I lived in Kagman 1. Every year during the rainy season, I would see a group of Mariana Mallards in a little wet land area. They may be in the preservation area, which is fenced in. To be positive in making this claim of not seeing this species of bird since the late 70's is not true. The bird still exists. This is my opinion. My last sighting was in mid to late 2001. Thank you

Adrian San Nicolas

Sioux City, Iowa

Character assassination sullies History Channel

By **DAVID SHAW**

Los Angeles Times

Early in my career, I had a city editor—an otherwise reasonable man, a talented journalist and a good friend—who nonetheless spun the most astonishingly farfetched conspiracy theories about the assassination of President Kennedy. In one of his more fevered imaginings—spun over his desk at work and over bourbon and poker in his home—my friend told a conspiracy tale in which a police officer in Long Beach, Calif., was murdered, in the police station, to cover up his role in the assassination and its coverup.

But not even my friend went as far as a History Channel documentary broadcast in November that argued—no, insisted—that Lyndon Johnson "murdered John Kennedy to become president and to avoid prison," as one Texas lawyer said in the opening moments of "The Guilty Men," one program in a 12-hour series called "The Men Who Killed Kennedy."

The series, which covered various Kennedy assassination theories and was part of the History Channel's coverage of the 40th anniversary of the event, attracted virtually no media attention at the time, although outraged relatives and former colleagues of President Johnson did protest and demanded an opportunity to rebut the charge—and got nowhere.

When that protest intensified last month, the History Channel agreed to appoint a panel of three historians to "discuss the controversial theory and to review the program." When their examination is complete, the History Channel has promised to broadcast another program featuring their conclusions about "America's fascination with the Kennedy assassination, (including) the credibility of this particular theory and the way it was presented."

Credibility? Incredibility would be more like it.

I could understand such a theory being published in the National Enquirer or on some whacko Weblog or in a novel by Robert Ludlum or Richard Condon. But the History Channel is supposed to present, well, history, not preposterous and irresponsible speculation by folks repeating the hearsay rantings of folks now dead. (One of the key figures in the show is Barr McClellan, who repeats charges he made in a 2003 book "Blood, Money & Power: How L.B.J. Killed J.F.K."—a book The New York Times characterized as containing "several passages of admittedly fictional projection.")

How did the History Channel decide to descend into this ugly morass?

"The Men Who Killed Kennedy" aired in somewhat different forms in England in 1988 and again in 1995, and producer Nigel Turner was criticized both times for some of his assassination theories.

Executives at the History Channel say their program was "original" and was subject to "a review" beforehand. But they won't say who conducted that review and they won't answer specific questions on the program, pending the outcome of the examination by their panel of historians (Robert Dallek, author of biographies of Johnson and Kennedy; Stanley Kutler, professor of American Institutions at the University of Wisconsin and author of two books on Watergate; and Thomas Sugrue, history professor at the University of Pennsylvania).

They do, however, say they are "reviewing our review procedures," and in a prepared statement announcing the appointment of the historians, Dan Davids, executive vice president and general manager of the channel, said, "Nothing is more important to the History Channel than the integrity of our programming."

He also said he and his fellow executives "take (critics') ... concerns about historical accuracy and fairness very seriously and are taking appropriate action."

The "appropriate action" would have been to avoid showing "The Guilty Men" in the first place—or, failing that, to have retracted it and apologized for it immediately.

I'm all for a robust debate and responsible investigation of the Kennedy assassination—or any other momentous event in U.S. history. But this program was neither debate nor responsible. It was a farce.

It's true that nine times in the course of the one-hour, independently produced program, the History Channel's resident historian, Steve Gillon, reminded viewers that it offered "just one of the many theories about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy." But that's as close as the station came to a disclaimer.

I've long, albeit reluctantly, accepted the Warren Commission conclusion that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone in killing Kennedy. It's not that I find the commission's arguments so persuasive. But while I remain open to—indeed eager for—a better explanation, every alternative I've heard so far seems even less persuasive.

One need not accept the Warren Commission findings, though, to be horrified by the History Channel broadcast of "The Guilty Men." One need not even have been an admirer of Johnson.

Johnson could be—and often was—ruthless in pursuit of his objectives. It would not be difficult to make the case that the concept of corruption was not entirely foreign to Johnson's experience. But murder? Johnson as a presidential assassin—not the trigger man but the man who ordered and organized the killing?

Wait, there's more. "The Guilty Men" said Johnson ordered seven other murders—including that of his own sister. Johnson as a serial killer?

"Deep in the heart of Texas lie buried some of the darkest and most well-kept secrets that tell us who killed John F. Kennedy on Nov. 22, 1963—and why," says an ominous voice-over near the beginning of "The Guilty Men." Then: "Those forces of darkness revolved around one of the state's most famous political sons—Lyndon Baines Johnson."

The show went on to "document" what it called Johnson's "murderous cycle" and posited the theory that he had help in the Kennedy assassination from the CIA (allegedly fearful that Kennedy would abolish it), the FBI (whose boss feared that Kennedy would fire him), the military-industrial complex (supposedly worried that Kennedy planned to withdraw American forces from Vietnam), and various Texas oil billionaires (alarmed that Kennedy would end or reduce the oil depletion allowance that had helped make them billionaires).

The show also said Johnson feared imprisonment because of his association with Bobby Baker, a Johnson protege and Senate aide who was forced to resign after accusations of illegal activities and was later imprisoned after being found guilty of theft, fraud and income tax evasion.

Various elements of this far-reaching conspiracy theory have been advanced before, of course—mostly by the kooks who frequent the fringes of society and also by Oliver Stone in his 1991 film, "JFK."

But not even Stone went as far as "The Guilty Men" in finger-ing Johnson, and Stone was making a movie—reprehensible as it was—not a program for the heretofore respected History Channel.

I hope their expert historians move quickly in their review, and when they return—as they inevitably will—with a report that there isn't a shred of evidence linking LBJ to the JFK assassination, I hope the History Channel—and its parent companies, Hearst, Disney's ABC Cable and General Electric's NBC—will have the good sense to make a public and abject apology.

If not, I've got this script I'm working on and I figure they'll be interested in it. It reveals the dark secret about how Harry Truman conspired with Mr. Blackwell and Elvis Presley's tailor "Nudie" to poison President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and make the cause of his death look like a cerebral hemorrhage—all because they thought a wheelchair-bound president did not inspire American men to buy fine clothing.

Shaw is a reporter for The Times.

Saipan Tribune

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NMI lacks 'sophisticated' Medicaid staff

By LIBERTY DONES

REPORTER

The Department of Public Health said the CNMI Medicaid has been overcharged by off-island medical providers for lack of "sophisticated" personnel.

"The CNMI has been overcharged...[between 40 to 100 percent] because CNMI Medicaid lacked sophisticated staff and the technical expertise and computer resources, which would have shown that the amounts demanded were excessive, inaccurate, unreasonable, and illegal for the services rendered," said DPH

START

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The task force consists of Saipan Mayor Juan B. Tudela, Northern Islands Mayor Valentin Taisakan, Tinian and Aguigan Mayor Francisco Borja, Attorney General Pamela Brown, acting Lands and Natural Resources Secretary Richard Seman, and Saipan Chamber of Commerce president Alex Sablan, among others.

Lawmakers—including Sen. Henry H. San Nicolas and Reps. Claudio Norita and Arnold Palacios—form part of the task force. The Coastal Resources Management Office is also member to the task force.

"The federal government had specific obligations as trustee to preserve the resources of the Commonwealth for its people. We firmly believe that the federal government's attempt to deny the people of the Commonwealth their rightful ownership of the submerged lands is a breach of [its] fiduciary duties and a violation of international law," said Manglona, in a letter to the governor.

"This breach and violation is egregious and is only made worse considering the current lack of participation and representation of the Commonwealth

NORITA

From Page 1

ness, response to hazardous materials, and weapons of mass destruction," said the public information officer.

He noted that another company subcontracted by Aranza's group—the Science Applications International Group—is the same firm hired by many U.S. states to prepare their respective state plans.

"With homeland security being a significant endeavor, I don't think we have on-island expertise to evaluate what the Office of Domestic Preparedness wanted. We had a short time to submit it [the plan] for the FY04 funds—less than two months. We needed an expert to help us do it. I think it's perfectly justifiable to get professionals, especially since we're talking tens of millions of dollars," Callaghan said in defense of the administration.

Norita said the administration, when it entered into a deal with FSE, should have agreed to make the contract funds conditional to the grant award.

Secretary James U. Hofsneider in a recent report to the U.S. Congress.

In the same report, Hofsneider highlighted Medicaid funding disparity. He said that, compared with states that get as high as 77 percent reimbursement from the federal government, the CNMI Medicaid only receives 19 percent federal assistance.

The cost of medical care for the Medicaid population in the CNMI reaches \$13.5 million a year. Of that amount, the federal government shoulders only about \$2.5 million.

Due to insufficient federal funds, he said that CNMI physicians and the local hospital do not get paid for their

care of Medicaid patients.

This means new providers will not enter the market and the few that are in the market will eventually leave. The burden of the cost of this local Medicaid care on the CNMI government is crushing," said Hofsneider.

Further, he said that since the program is underfunded, it is extremely difficult to obtain competent on- and off-island care for very ill people, especially children. "Providers do not want to accept CNMI Medicaid patients because of the delay and difficulty in securing payments from CNMI Medicaid," he said.

of representation in the U.S. Congress," it said.

Sometime in January, Chief Judge Alex R. Munson temporarily stayed his ruling on the submerged lands case pursuant to an agreement between CNMI and federal attorneys.

The AGO then said that the judge's ruling rested any jurisdictional confusion that might arise regarding law enforcement matters.

"Specifically, it ensures that the CNMI can fully enforce local laws applicable to fish, wildlife and coral reef protection, public health and safety, immigration, and criminal conduct within three nautical miles of its shores," the AGO said. "In essence, the stay guarantees that all local enforcement efforts can continue unimpeded and without challenge."

CNMI and federal attorneys agreed, however, that the CNMI could not sell or lease out the submerged lands and alienate any interest in oil, gas and minerals.

According to the AGO, negotiations between federal and local authorities resulted in the temporary stay.

U.S. Interior Deputy Assistant Secretary David Cohen and the U.S. Department of Justice also had talks with the CNMI Governor's Office and the AGO on the matter.

problem, as long as the congressman can keep the plan's confidentiality.

Earlier reports indicated that the CNMI's homeland security plan had been rejected by the federal government.

The administration explained, however, that the "rejection" was only a "formatting" and not a "content" issue.

"I hope it's a formatting issue. And I hope we correct this and I hope we receive this \$5.8 million. I've read in reports that representatives from New York and California are complaining about the distribution of dollar per ratio for homeland security funds, and how the CNMI and the territories are getting a lot more funding per person than some states like New York and California.

"Now, those states have a big voice in Congress. And if we don't get our act together and format properly, then the reps of NY and California will probably make a fight for that...If it's a formatting issue, I hope so. And let's format properly; because we need those homeland security funds," said Norita.

He said that Hawaii facilities have refused CNMI Medicaid patients "due to our inability to pay our bills timely."

These patients included a seven-year-old leukemia patient whose family was asked to pay \$100,000 upfront in Hawaii and a critically sick child who could not get into a Los Angeles hospital without promising to pay rates between two to three times what the California Medicaid program would pay for the same care.

Meantime, the CNMI Medicaid program earlier received a total of \$787,990 refund from Honolulu-based Queens Medical Center and the local

outpatient PHI Pharmacy following findings of overcharging.

The local Medicaid said it received a \$542,292-refund since November from QMC for the period covering November 2001 to November 2002 and \$245,292 from PHI Pharmacy for the period covering June 2002 to December 2002.

From FY 2002 to FY2003 alone, Medicaid patients in the CNMI grew from 7,202 to 8,723.

The CNMI government is asking the U.S. Congress to eliminate the cap on Medicaid contribution and raise the federal participation to up to 77 percent.

per gallon; and diesel, \$2.339 a gallon. Full-service prices are slightly higher, with premium gasoline reaching a price of \$2.459 per gallon.

The price increases caught the attention of the Attorney General's Office, which earlier announced joining the gas price-monitoring project by the Federal Trade Commission.

The AGO said complaints about gas prices could be sent by email to attorney-general@saipan.com or in writing to this address: Office of the Attorney General-Civil Division, Caller Box 10007, Capitol Hill, Saipan, MP96950.

House Rep. Ray Yumul had vowed to look into possibly introducing a divortement measure at the Legislature, which would prohibit fuel suppliers from owning gas retail stations.

Brian Caldwell, the CNMI's consumer counsel, first floated his suggestion for the Legislature to come up with a divortement bill in the oil industry.

for GES and the Garapan Headstart, citing nothing in the committee report that offered justification for such a departure.

Quitugua explained that the distribution of funds was mainly to alleviate overcrowding in Kagman Elementary School and Kagman High School, according to the priorities cited by PSS.

"The number one priority was additional classrooms," said Quitugua.

Standing Committee Report 14-9, among others, indicated that there is a dire need to increase the capacity of PSS classrooms in both schools as student enrollment continues to rise.

PSS said in a letter to the Ways and Means Committee that Kagman High School needs 10 more classrooms, which will cost a total of \$1.15 million.

Saipan Southern High School reportedly requires two more classrooms, while GES needs five.

HB 14-62, authored by Rep. Ramon A. Tebuteb, was passed with a floor amendment offered by Rep. Jesus T. Attao.

The final bill approved distributes the \$1.86 million among the following:

- \$692,220 for additional classrooms, among others, at Kagman Elementary School
- \$620,405 for more classrooms, among others, at Kagman High School
- \$147,375 for the CNMI's share under the DHHS Administration for Children and Families Assistance Award for the construction of the Garapan Headstart Center.
- \$200,000 for more Tinian Headstart Center classrooms
- \$200,000 for more Rota Headstart Center classrooms

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Biz to NMC: Teach students good work ethic

By LIBERTY DONES
REPORTER

Private businesses have strongly encouraged the Northern Marianas College to focus on its students' work ethic as it prepares them for the real business world.

In particular, NMC said that businesses are particular about employees' work attendance, dedication to work, and concern for the company.

"The number one reason why I fire people is because they don't

show up. I'm not [even] talking about punctuality. I'm speaking of just showing up to work. Can you teach students to just show up to work daily?" asked one business representative during a recent dialogue with NMC's Business Department.

Another employer said, "I want employees who will respect my equipment. Can you instill in them a respect for other people's equipment?"

Meantime, NMC business department chair Jeff Willden said the college fully appreciates

the input from the business community.

He said the dialogue was the first of a series between NMC and the local business leaders following the recent creation of Business Program Advisory Council or PBAC.

PBAC is composed of CNMI business community leaders and NMC business instructors with a goal to advise and recommend measures to NMC "to improve the degree and certificate programs."

"The council provided val-

able input with respect to qualities that will make our students more successful after they graduate—qualities that they look for as employers when hiring," Willden said.

He said the council's guidance will help the business department in improving instruction, course design, and program content.

"The feedback received from the council at the initial meeting was oriented towards elements of the informal curriculum, specifically values that are essential to gain and retain employment,

rather than book knowledge or skills," said Willden.

Right now, the NMC's business department offers courses in accounting, computer applications and programming, economics, marketing, management and business administration, office technology, as well as tourism and travel industry management.

"The department is an instructional division within the college, not to be confused with the Small Business Development Center that is responsible for teaching business and re-

lated courses," said Willden.

The first PBAC meeting was attended by the owners and executives from various businesses: Pelly enterprises, Megabyte Computers, CNMI Travel Agency, Alexander Real Estate, Calvary Christian Academy, Chong's Corp., Delta Management Corp., Saipan Photo Lab, and Verizon Micronesia.

The NMC team included Willden, Dr. John Griffin, Bernie Sablan, Scott Tan, Larry Lee, Wil Laui, Rik Villegas, and Perry Conner.

Guam cancer clinic closes

HAGATNA, Guam (PDN/PIR)—More than 200 cancer patients on Guam will have to seek medical care and treatment overseas beginning April because the Cancer Institute of Guam is closing its doors.

Dr. Elangovan Balakrishnan, the Tamuning facility's medical oncologist, said the institute will close April 8, leaving patients with no alternative on the island.

"It's definitely an impact to Guam and the community here. People will have to go off island to Hawaii, Manila or California," Balakrishnan said. "It's going to be a financial burden on families and it will be emotionally difficult, specifically when they have to be off island for six months, away from family. In terms of follow-ups, that will also be difficult."

Since the institute opened in 1997, cancer patients here have been able to get care and treatment without having to travel off island. The institute, located at the Guam Medical Plaza in Tamuning, has given many patients here access to services that they had not been able to afford in the past because of the cost of finding care off island. Additionally, patients have said the ability to stay on Guam has helped them through their recovery because of the presence of family support.

Balakrishnan said the institute's owners in Hawaii made the decision to close the facility

because the company had been losing money for the past year and a half.

Dr. Bobby Baker, the founder and owner of the institute, who lives in Hawaii, could not be reached for comment as of press time last night.

The facility took a beating when Supertyphoon Pongsona pummeled the island in December 2002. Baker, at the time, said the storm caused \$3 million in damage. The facility also had been damaged by 1997's Supertyphoon Pako.

Balakrishnan said the costs to rebuild after the storms, the island's economy and rising costs of doing business on Guam all played factors in the owners' decision to close the institute.

Staff affected by the closure include Balakrishnan, a nurse and a receptionist/nurse. Balakrishnan said he plans to leave the island as soon as the facility closes.

Balakrishnan said Baker is looking into the possibility of reopening the facility, but needs more investors. He said Baker could decide within six months or more if he wants to reopen the facility.

Meanwhile, the institute has told patients that they need to immediately pick up their medical records and should speak to their primary care doctors as soon as possible.

"But newly diagnosed patients will have to go off island for care," he said.

Leaking Fiji fuel line diverts cruise ships

SUVA, Fiji (FijiSUN/PIR)—Mobil Oil Fiji has remained tightlipped about a reported leaking fuel pipe that is causing cruise liners to reroute their trips to Fiji.

Minutes tabled by the Suva City Council highlighted the lack of cruise liners in Fiji because of this problem.

While two vessels arrived last month, a schedule of expected vessel arrivals was yet to be submitted by shipping companies.

The council's director of administration, Ranjit Singh, said the council had queried the reasons behind the lack of cruise vessel arrivals in Suva and was reliably informed by a prominent businessman that a leaking fuel pipe was the deterrent.

Mr Singh said they had called

Shell for an explanation as was

procedure but no answers were forthcoming.

However, Shell Fiji yesterday cleared the air on its involvement while Mobil Oil operations manager Brendon Charness did not wish to comment.

The council minutes said cruise vessels were rerouted to Noumea for fueling because of the leaking fuel problem at the Suva wharf.

Shell Fiji said the pipe in question is outdated and out of use. The pipe belongs to Mobil Oil.

"The line for fuel to the wharf is condemned. Users pay a fee to Mobil for that line," a spokesman for Shell said.

Shell Fiji said the company could provide fuel oil to cruise liners but through the expensive and lengthy process of using barges.



EDITH G. ALEJANDRO

NMC students Shirlynn O. Perez, Pamela Sablan, Juliana Dela Rosa, and Manuela Sablan receive their certificates of scholarship from THC executive vice president Jerry Tan and THC corporate communications executive Lyn Knight during a brief ceremony yesterday at the Dai Ichi Hotel Saipan Beach.

Tan Holdings presents \$5K in scholarships

Tan Holdings Corp. yesterday awarded five local students \$1,000 each in scholarship money to help them attend Northern Marianas College. The scholarships were presented during a luncheon with the Tan Holding Foundation board of directors and college officials at the Dai-ichi Hotel Saipan Beach New Jade Garden Restaurant.

The first \$5,000 donation toward the "Tan Holdings NMC Scholarship" was presented to college officials last year by THC's Executive Vice Presi-

dent Jerry Tan, who also serves as president of the Northern Marianas College Foundation. The company has pledged an additional \$5,000 in scholarship money for five more students for the 2004 Fall Semester.

The students who received awards yesterday were selected based on a variety of criteria by a selection committee comprised of college and THC officials. The winning students were Pamela C. Sablan, Rene Villegas, Juliana D. Dela Rosa, Shirlynn O. Perez, and Manuela A. Sablan.

"Tan Holdings feels it's very important to the islands' future to support education in our community, and we wanted to present these scholarship funds as our way of helping to make higher education more accessible and affordable for local students," said Tan.

"We sincerely appreciate Tan Holdings' continued support of Northern Marianas College. This Tan Holdings Scholarship Program will be welcomed by our resident students and will contribute in enhancing the education and

training of our local workforce," said acting NMC President Tony DeLeon Guerrero.

To apply for the scholarship, students must be U.S. citizens and must have resided in the Northern Marianas for at least one year. The \$1,000 scholarship must be used for tuition and books. For applications for the Fall Semester scholarships to be awarded in August 2004, contact the Financial Aid Office of NMC or Tan Holdings Corporate Affairs Department at 233-3772.

and to watch out for swimmers," said DPS in a statement.

As a reminder, a portion of the main roads will be closed on April 16 and 17 and April 24 and 25, 2004 to accommodate these events. More information will be made available to the

public in the coming days.

Once again, the public is asked to drive or boat with utmost caution.

For more information, contact Rose Ada, Traffic PIO, at the Department of Public Safety's Traffic Section at number 664-9084-5.

DPS urges caution in lead up to sports events

The 2004 Tagaman and Exterra events is scheduled to take place in April of this year. There will be athletes practicing for these events on the highways and byways of Saipan.

The Department of Public Safety is asking for people's

cooperation with regard to the safety of the participants. It urged commuters to drive cautiously on the highway and watch out for the bicyclists who have started their training.

"In addition, boaters are asked to be extra careful out in the water

World

Iraqis sign landmark constitution

By HAMZA HENDAWI
AP WRITER

BAGHDAD, Iraq (AP)—For an hour anyway, Iraqi leaders put aside their disagreements during the signing of a landmark interim constitution Monday, heaping praise on the U.S.-backed document amid patriotic songs and Quranic verses urging unity. But sectarian differences resurfaced as soon as the event ended.

The Shiites' most influential cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Husseini al-Sistani, issued a religious edict saying he had reservations about the interim constitution and that it will gain legitimacy only when adopted by an elected assembly.

His supporters on Iraq's Governing Council pledged to try to amend parts of the charter, saying they effectively give minor-

ity Kurds and Sunni Muslims a veto over a permanent constitution due to be drafted and put to a referendum next year.

"This law places obstacles in the path of reaching a permanent constitution for the country that maintains its unity, the rights of its sons of all sects and ethnic backgrounds," al-Sistani said.

President Bush praised the 22-page document, saying in a statement that its adoption was a "historic milestone in the Iraqi people's long journey from tyranny and violence to liberty and peace."

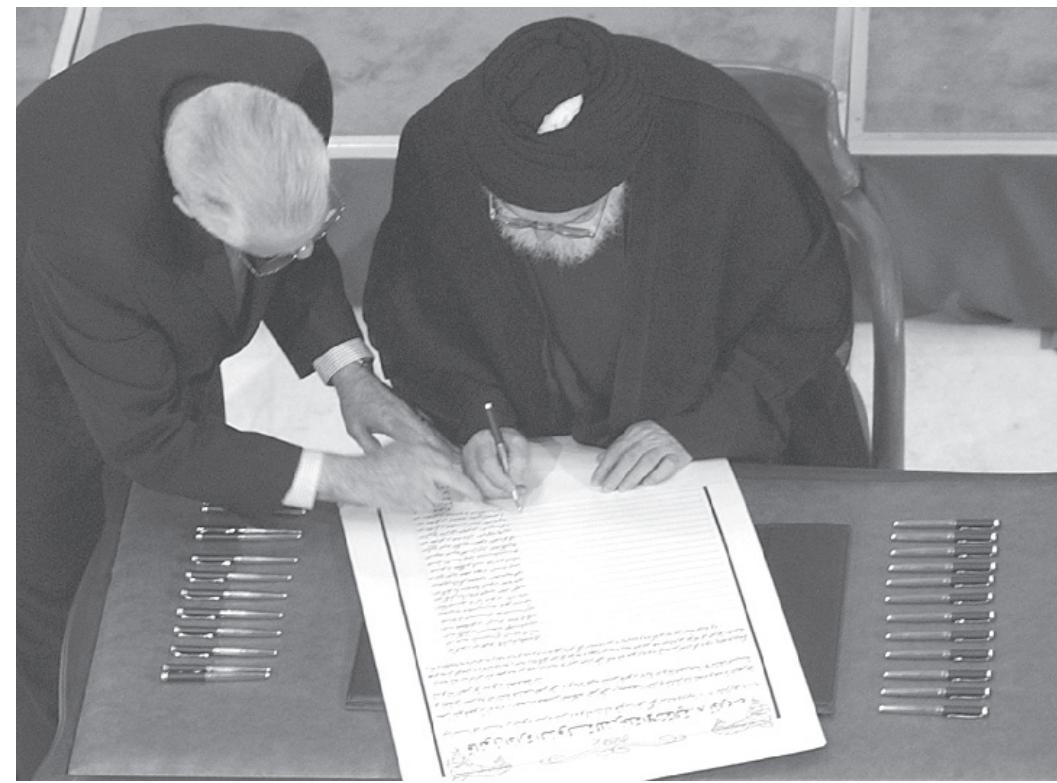
Still, al-Sistani's edict and the Shiite Muslim council members' comments somewhat devalued the historic significance of the signing of a charter that promises to compensate Iraqis for years of oppression under Saddam Hussein, safeguard the freedoms and human rights of

their ethnic and religious groups and lay down the foundations for a genuine democracy.

Monday's ceremony, held in the marble-and-glass Convention Center, a huge building inside the "Green Zone" complex housing the headquarters of the U.S.-led coalition, kicked off with a recital of carefully chosen Quranic verses that urged Muslims to set aside their differences.

Later, children dressed in Arab, Assyrian and Kurdish costumes performed patriotic songs. The performance drew warm applause from the roughly 200 guests, including L. Paul Bremer, chief U.S. administrator in Iraq.

Of the council's 25 members, 21 were present. Those absent were represented by deputies. Led by current council president Mohammed Bahr



AP

Members of the Iraqi Governing Council celebrate shortly after affixing their signatures on the new interim constitution in a historic signing ceremony Monday March 8, 2004 in Baghdad, Iraq. The signing came after the council members finally resolved a political impasse sparked by objections from the country's most powerful cleric. The signing was a key step in U.S. plans to hand over power to the Iraqis.

al-Ulloum, the members were called forward one at a time to sign the document, which sat on

an antique wooden desk used by Iraq's first monarch, King Faisal I.

They used gold-and-blue fountain pens to sign the document and kept them as memorabilia.

Top Iraq nuke scientist seeks UN probe

BEIRUT, Lebanon (AP)—The father of Iraq's nuclear bomb program denied Monday that Saddam Hussein tried to restart his atomic activities, but acknowledged Iraq tried to conceal its banned weapons operations before destroying them 13 years ago.

Jafar Dha Jafar, speaking publicly for the first time since U.S. forces occupied Baghdad, also called for a U.N. probe of what its inspectors knew before the U.S.-led

invasion. Inspectors "reached total conviction" that Iraq was free of nuclear weapons yet failed to convey that to the Security Council because of U.S. pressure, he said.

"Reports of the United Nations to the Security Council should have been clear and courageous," Jafar said.

Before the invasion last March, chief U.N. inspector Hans Blix and his nuclear counterpart Mohamed ElBaradei, head of the International Atomic En-

ergy Agency, said that in four months of searching, their teams found no evidence of any weapons of mass destruction or programs to build them, and needed more time to make a definitive conclusion.

Asked to respond to Jafar's claims, IAEA spokeswoman Melissa Fleming said ElBaradei was forthright to the Security Council. She rejected the idea that investigators were absolutely convinced Iraq had no weapons program.

US blasts allies over Iran nukes

VIENNA, Austria (AP)—In a trans-Atlantic rift over Iran, a top U.S. official complained in a letter to France, Germany and Britain that their softer stance was hurting common efforts to get Tehran to honor promises for full nuclear disclosure, diplomats told The Associated Press on Monday.

News of the letter by U.S. Undersecretary of State John Bolton came amid tensions at a key board meeting of the U.N.

atomic agency over whether Iran has done enough to banish suspicions it had a nuclear weapons program.

The diplomats, who spoke on condition of anonymity, refused to provide details about the letter but said such direct criticism was unusual.

Convinced that Tehran at one point wanted to make nuclear weapons and continues to harbor secrets, Washington wants tough language to dominate

any resolution adopted by the board of the Vienna-based International Atomic Energy Agency.

On the other side, Germany, Britain and France seek to emphasize progress Iran has made in revealing nuclear activities and cooperating with U.N. inspectors since the discovery last year of a secret uranium enrichment program and covert tests that could be applied toward making weapons.

Libya returns nuclear fuel to Russia

MOSCOW (AP)—Enriched nuclear fuel the former Soviet Union provided to Libya two decades ago was returned to Russia on Monday, the International Atomic Energy Agency said.

Russia's Interfax news agency quoted an unidentified Atomic Energy Ministry spokesman as saying 88 nuclear fuel assemblies—bundles of rods that contain fuel used for reactors—were returned from the Tajura research center out-

side Tripoli, which had received it between 1980 and 1984.

The Tajura facility includes a 10-megawatt reactor built in 1980 with equipment from the Soviet Union.

A statement from the International Atomic Energy Agency, the U.N. nuclear watchdog, said it helped Libya in recent days with the removal of weapons-grade uranium from the research facility for transport back to Russia.

Libya, after long negotiations with the United States and Britain, recently acknowledged having a nuclear weapons program and pledged to scrap it.

The uranium was 80 percent enriched and was in the form of fresh, unused fuel, the Vienna-based IAEA said in a statement. It was in fuel components containing about 28.7 pounds of fissile uranium-235, as well as about 6.6 pounds of non-fissile uranium, the statement said.

PSS006

Haiti's interim president urges calm

By PAISLEY DODDS
AP WRITER

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP)—Haiti's interim president took the reins of his country's shattered government Monday as supporters of Jean-Bertrand Aristide demanded the ousted leader's return. U.S. Marines acknowledged they killed one of seven people gunned down in weekend violence—the first armed action of their week-old mission here.

Military helicopters circled overhead and U.S. Marines in armored cars pa-

trolled the streets Monday outside the National Palace as Boniface Alexandre was formally installed.

"Aristide or death!" Aristide supporters yelled at the gates of the palace during the ceremony, their shouts carrying into the room where Alexandre urged his countrymen to remain calm.

"We are all brothers and sisters," said Alexandre, who has served as president for a week and was officially sworn in Feb. 29. "We are all in the same boat, and if it sinks, it sinks with all of us."

Earlier, Aristide declared from his African exile that he was still president

of Haiti and urged "peaceful resistance" in his homeland.

"I am the democratically elected president and I remain so. I plead for the restoration of democracy," Aristide said from Bangui, Central African Republic, in his first public appearance since he fled Haiti Feb. 29 aboard a plane chartered by the U.S. government.

Aristide said his departure was a "political kidnapping (that) unfortunately opened the road to an occupation."

The United States denies Aristide's charge that he was forced to step down. But the 15-nation Caribbean

Community has called for an international investigation.

In Washington, State Department spokesman Richard Boucher said, "If Mr. Aristide really wants to serve his country, he really has to, we think, let his nation get on with the future and not try to stir up the past again."

Aristide was a wildly popular slum priest, elected on promises to champion the poor who make up the vast majority of Haiti's 8 million people.

But he has lost support, with Haitians saying he failed to improve their lives, condoned corruption and used

police and armed supporters to attack his political opponents.

U.S. Marines and French Legionnaires have been in Haiti since Aristide's departure Feb. 29, the vanguard of a U.N. force to restore peace to the country, where a monthlong rebellion left more than 130 dead. On Monday, there were about 1,600 Marines, 800 French soldiers and police and 130 Chilean troops in Haiti.

A United Nations team was on its way to Haiti to plan for a multinational force that will deploy there within the next three months, a U.N. spokesman said Monday.

Israel plans better road blocks for West Bank

JERUSALEM (AP)—Israel's defense minister endorsed a plan Monday to speed up checks at West Bank roadblocks, but also make them more permanent—a sign that crippling travel restrictions on Palestinians will not be lifted soon.

The plan includes a code of conduct for soldiers, high-tech devices and a special lane for ambulances, VIPs and foreigners, according to a Defense Ministry statement.

One Israeli army commander recommended this week that Israel use millions of dollars confiscated from Palestinian banks to improve roadblocks, but it was not clear whether Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz adopted the idea.

Israel set up dozens of roadblocks in the West Bank after Palestinian-Israeli

violence erupted in 2000 to keep militants from reaching Israel. Soldiers enforce frequent curfews and travel bans, crippling movement in the territory and harming the Palestinian economy.

Palestinians often wait in long lines to be checked. Human rights groups have complained about Israeli abuses, chronicling cases of ambulances being held up or of soldiers beating innocent Palestinians. Israel has admitted wrongdoing some cases, denying others or attributing them to security needs.

Israel insists the roadblocks are needed to stop suicide bombers and other Palestinian attackers. Suicide bombers have killed more than 450 Israelis. Altogether, in 41 months of fighting, over 2,700 people have been killed on the Palestinian side and 930 on the Israeli side.

Zimbabwe seizes US-registered plane

HARARE, Zimbabwe (AP)—Zimbabwean authorities have seized a U.S.-registered cargo plane carrying 64 "suspected mercenaries" and military equipment, the Home Affairs minister said Monday.

The Boeing 727-100 was detained at Harare's main airport late Sunday after

it was not immediately clear where the plane had come from, or what its purpose was.

Mohadi gave no further information, but said full details would be released once officials have established "the true identities of the men and their ultimate mission."

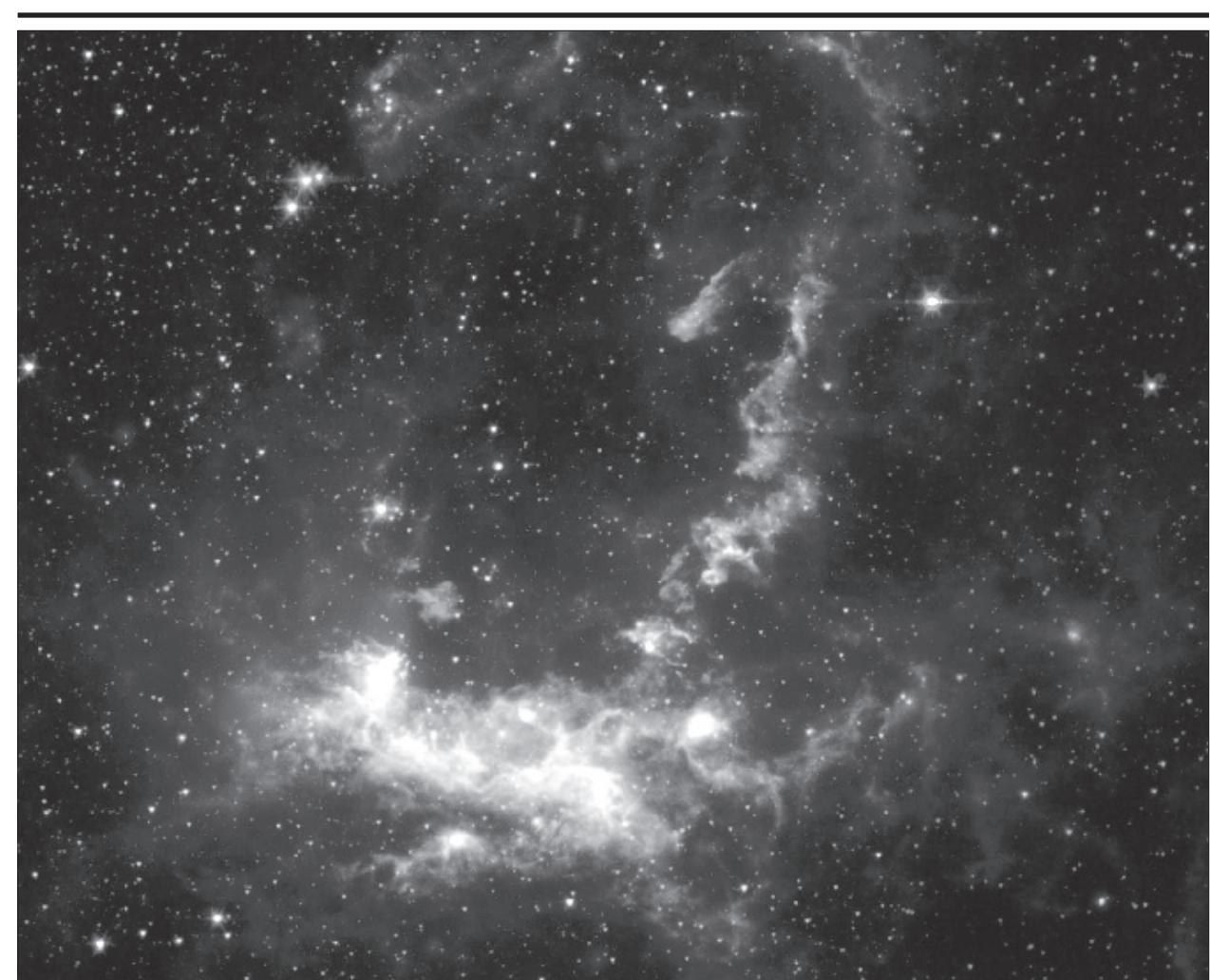
State-run TV broadcast footage of a white plane with the tail number N4610. Inside the aircraft, the station showed two satellite telephones, radios, blue backpacks, sleeping bags, hiking boots, an inflatable raft, paddles, bolt cutters and what appeared to be a can of Mace.

No weapons were shown, but the station said officials were still going through the cargo section.

Passengers and crew, all of them "heavily built males" and most of them white, were also taken to the base, where a detention barracks is located, state television reported.

The plane is registered to Dodson Aviation Inc. of Ottawa, Kan. However, company director Robert Dodson said it had sold the aircraft about a week ago to a "reputable" South African company, Logo Ltd.

"I think they were going to use it for charter flights," he said by telephone.



A STAR DIES

This image released by NASA shows the Henize 206 nebula. The nebula was formed by the death of a massive star millions of years ago and now houses a group of newborn stars. The image from NASA's Spitzer Space Telescope shows the nebula which is in the Large Magellanic Cloud about 163,000 light-years away. The false-color image shows embedded young stars as bright white spots, and surrounding gas and dust in blue, green and red. Also revealed is a ring of green gas, which is the wake of the ancient supernova's explosion. "The image is a wonderful example of the cycle of birth and death that gives rise to stars throughout the universe," said Dr. Varoujan Gorjian, a scientist at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory, Pasadena, Calif., and principal investigator for the latest observation.

WORLD Brief

Yemeni man convicted for terror attacks

BEIRUT, Lebanon (AP)—A military court in Beirut sentenced a Yemeni man on Monday to 20 years in jail for terrorism, including involvement in an attempt to bomb the U.S. Embassy in Lebanon.

Moammar Abdullah al-Awamah was among 35 people indicted by state prosecutors in the bombing of U.S. and British targets in Lebanon from May 2002 to April 2003. The bombings in Beirut and the northern city of Tripoli were directed at supermarkets and fast food franchises. Five people were wounded in the explosions.

The court also sentenced Ali Mousa al-Masri, a Lebanese, to five years in jail on the same charges.

During his trial, al-Awamah denied involvement in the attacks, or

links to Osama bin Laden's al-Qaida terrorist group.

British lawmakers stall legal overhaul

LONDON (AP)—Prime Minister Tony Blair's plans to overhaul Britain's age-old legal system stumbled on Monday, as opposition peers in the House of Lords voted to delay the government's reform package for further scrutiny.

Many of Britain's most senior judges, backed by the main opposition Conservative Party, say there are flaws in the government plan to eliminate the ancient post of Lord Chancellor, create an independent commission to appoint judges and establish a new supreme court as the nation's highest court of appeal.

Following an eight-hour debate in the House of Lords, peers voted 216 to 183 to refer the Constitutional Reform Bill to a special committee where it can be further examined.

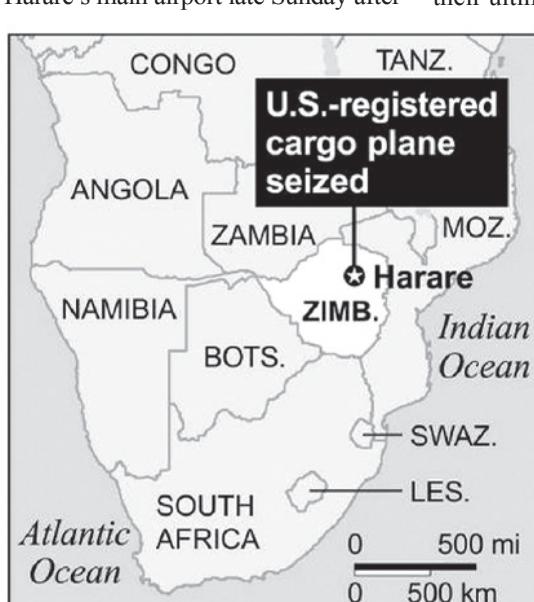
UN refugee official predicts mass return

Millions of refugees will return to their homes in Africa in coming years as nine conflicts on the continent are resolved, and the world must help their home countries receive them, the top U.N. refugee official said Monday.

U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees Ruud Lubbers said the return of the refugees is expected as nine long-standing conflicts are resolved in coming years.

"We have a common responsibility to ensure that the seeds of peace and development which have been sown in Africa are given the opportunity to grow," Lubbers said in Geneva at a conference on African repatriation.

Lubbers, former prime minister of the Netherlands, oversees the U.N. agency charged with protecting the world's 20 million refugees. (AP)



SOURCE: ESRI

its owners allegedly made "a false declaration of its cargo and crew," Home Affairs Minister Kembo Mohadi said at a news briefing.

"The plane was actually carrying 64 suspected mercenaries of various nationalities," Mohadi said. "Further investigations also revealed that on board was military material."

Life & Style

Measuring intelligence: From IQ to no clue

By RICHARD MORIN
THE WASHINGTON POST

On Christmas Day 1999, CNN's Larry King was interviewing Stephen Hawking, the famous cosmologist and Lucasian Professor of Mathematics at Cambridge University.

"What, professor, puzzles you the most?" King asked. "What do you think about the most?"

"Women," Hawking instantly replied.

It's a comfort that Hawking, one of the smartest guys in the world, is baffled by the opposite sex. But it's not surprising, said Satoshi Kanazawa of the London School of Economics.

Brainy people are no better than anyone else at making smart decisions in finding mates, maintaining family rela-

tionships, raising children, finding the way home and handling a wide variety of basic life skills, he claims.

That's because there are several kinds of formal "intelligence," Kanazawa argues in a forthcoming article in *Psychological Review*, and being smart one way doesn't necessarily mean you're smart in another. It is a view that is sure to be controversial among scientists who think about thinking, as it contradicts the prevailing view that general intelligence—the G Factor purportedly gauged by IQ tests—is a single thing and not, as Kanazawa and others claim, a set of independent mental "domains."

Kanazawa said some kinds of intelligence evolved slowly over time, and in response to identical pressures and

recurring needs. Everybody's heard about "emotional intelligence," popularized in a best-selling book almost a decade ago. Evolutionary psychologists have now identified several other types of intelligence, including the ability to acquire language, win a mate, recognize faces, orient oneself in a physical or geographical environment, and detect "cheaters" (those who violate social norms, such as people who lie to us).

There's another kind of intelligence, which Kanazawa and like-minded researchers call "improvisational intelligence." It's what most people think of when they think of intelligence—the ability to reason inductively or deductively, and to synthesize information to solve problems. Kanazawa argues

that this type of brainpower evolved in response to short-term pressures and unique stimuli, such as the occasional flood, famine or other natural disaster.

Is there any actual evidence to support the theory that intelligence comes in multiple forms, only one of which is measured by IQ tests?

Actually, there's quite a lot, Kanazawa said. If there were only one type of intelligence—the G Factor—then people with high IQs should be "smart" in every domain.

But that's not the case. Individuals with a high IQ are no more or less likely to get married or have children than low IQ individuals. (He interprets mating success as a measure of "reproductive intelligence.")

High IQ types are no more likely

than anyone else to engage in social activities such as spending an evening with friends; if anything, the Mensa crowd demonstrates less of what psychologists call "social intelligence." About a quarter of all autistic children have normal IQs, but lack language ability, a clear indication that the G Factor is separate from other types of intelligence, he said.

In one novel test, a psychologist took a bunch of subjects on a meandering hike into the forest, then told them to find their way back. High IQ types were no more or less likely to be able to orient themselves. In another test, a researcher asked people to find their way to a specific location in a computer maze. Once again, IQ didn't provide any edge.

Missing actor Spalding Gray found dead

NEW YORK (AP)—Actor-writer Spalding Gray, who laid bare his life and mingled performance art with comedy in acclaimed monologues like "Swimming to Cambodia," was found dead over the weekend, two months after he walked out of his Manhattan apartment and disappeared. He was 62.

Gray's body was pulled from the East River and was identified Monday through dental records and X-rays. The cause of his death was still under investigation, according to a spokeswoman for the medical examiner. But Gray had a history of depression and attempted suicide in 2002.

His family told police he was last seen Jan. 10.

"We're hoping now that we have some closure," his wife, Kathleen Russo, said from the couple's Long Island home. "The family will begin to heal."

Gray's riveting live performances generally featured only a desk and a glass of water as props. Usually wearing his trademark plaid flannel shirt, the performer would never move from

the desk as he read in a soft, New England-flecked accent.

He worked in underground theater in Manhattan, eventually co-founding the Wooster Group in 1979. There, he wrote an autobiographical trilogy of plays about life in Rhode Island.

In more than a dozen monologues starting in 1979, Gray told audiences about his childhood, "Sex and Death to the Age 14"; his adventures as a young man, "Booze, Cars and College Girls"; and his struggles as an actor, "A Personal History of the American Theater." Many were published in book form and several were made into films.

"The man may be the ultimate WASP neurotic, analyzing his actions with an intensity that would be unpleasantly egomaniacal if it weren't so self-deprecatingly funny," Associated Press Drama Critic Michael Kuchwara wrote in 1996. "He questions everything and ends up more exhausted than satisfied."

Gray's greatest success was his Obie-winning monologue "Swimming to Cambodia," which recounted

in part his movie role opposite Sam Waterston in "The Killing Fields." The monologue, developed over two years of performance, became a film directed by Jonathan Demme.

In the theater, he starred as the stage manager in the 1989 revival of "Our Town," a production that won a Tony Award for best revival.

"Spalding had an affinity with that material and its enormous sadness and wistfulness about lost opportunities and the mysteries of the universe," said "Our Town" revival director Gregory Mosher. "That probably was Spalding's main subject, wasn't it? Writing and thinking about the mysteries of life and death."

Gray's life in recent years was marred by tragedy and depression.

A horrific head-on car crash during a 2001 vacation in Ireland to mark his 60th birthday left him disheartened and in poor health, and he tried jumping from a bridge near his Long Island home in October 2002.

Gray, whose mother committed suicide when she was 52, spoke openly

about considering the same fate. In a 1997 interview, he even provided an epitaph for his tombstone: "An American Original: Troubled, Inner-Directed and Cannot Type."

Gray was born on June 5, 1941, one of three sons growing up in Barrington, R.I. His mother suffered a pair of ner-

vous breakdowns, committing suicide in 1967 after the second one.

He is survived by Russo; three children; and two brothers, Rockwell Gray, an English professor in St. Louis, and Channing Gray. A memorial service will be held in a couple of months, Russo said Monday.

Simpsons-related Dear Abby Column pulled

KANSAS CITY, Mo. (AP)—Somewhere in Springfield, state unknown, Bart Simpson is in detention, filling a chalkboard with the words "I will not write a fake letter to Dear Abby."

Well, it probably wasn't Bart's handiwork, but he'd no doubt approve of the prank that forced Dear Abby's editors to pull next Monday's advice column, which included a letter that mirrored an episode of "The Simpsons."

"It did sound too similar not to be a hoax," said Kathie Kerr, a spokeswoman for Kansas City-based Universal Press Syndicate.

The syndicate sent the column to newspaper subscribers last week. A day later, a newspaper editor called after noticing one of the letters to Abby sounded "awfully familiar," said Sue Roush, one of the column's editors.

The column is titled "Wife meets perfect match after husband strikes out." In the letter, the writer describes herself as a 34-year-old mother of three

who has been married for 10 years to a man who is "greedy, selfish, inconsistent and rude."

The writer says her husband, Gene, gave her a bowling ball for her birthday—complete with the holes drilled to fit his fingers and embossed with his name. Undeterred, the woman decides to learn to bowl and heads to the local lanes, where she meets another man, Franco, who is "kind, considerate and loving."

They fall in love and Franco proposes.

"I no longer love Gene," writes Stuck in a Love Triangle. "I want to divorce him and marry Franco. At the same time, I'm worried that Gene won't be able to move on with his life. I also think our kids would be devastated. What should I do?"

After the letter raised the suspicions of the newspaper editor, Universal Press Syndicate did some research and discovered that Gene seemed a lot like Homer Simpson's thoughtless

character in an episode titled "Life on the Fast Lane."

In both the letter and the Simpsons episode, the husbands grow suspicious when they stumble across bowling gloves—obvious gifts to their wives from the other man.

In the television show, Homer responds by ineptly professing his love for Marge, who later goes to him at the nuclear power plant where he works. He lifts her up and carries her out of the plant as his co-workers watch and cheer.

"Obviously, it has no basis in reality," said Fox Network spokesman Scott Grogan.

Jeanne Phillips, who writes Dear Abby, told "Stuck" to tell her husband why she strayed. "To save the marriage," she wrote, "he might be willing to change back to the man who bowed you over in the first place."

Phillips was traveling and her editors told The Associated Press she could not immediately be reached for comment.

PASSAGES

Hollywood screen beauty Frances Dee dies

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Frances Dee, a dark-haired beauty who co-starred in the 1930s and '40s with Maurice Chevalier, Gary Cooper, Ronald Colman and her husband, Joel McCrea, has died at 94.

Dee died Saturday at a hospital in Norwalk, Conn., her son Peter McCrea said Monday. The actress had suffered a stroke three weeks ago after spending the winter with her son at his home in Connecticut.

Dee achieved stardom in 1930 opposite Chevalier in one of the first talkie musicals, "The Playboy of Paris." Her beauty earned her leading roles in comedies and dramas, notably in the 1931 "An American Tragedy" as Sondra Finchley, the role played by Elizabeth Taylor in the 1951 remake "A Place in the Sun."

Her credits also included "Souls at Sea" with Cooper and George Raft, "Little Women," starring Katharine Hepburn, "If I Were King" with Colman, and "Of Human Bondage," in which she played Leslie Howard's sweetheart.

In 1933, Dee appeared with McCrea in "The Silver Cord." They married that year and co-starred again in "Wells Fargo" (1937) and "Four Faces West" (1948).

She appeared in occasional movies in the 1940s and '50s and retired after "Gypsy Colt" in 1954.

The McCreas bought a large ranch northwest of Los Angeles, and as the metropolitan area expanded, they became among the richest landowners in California.

They had three sons: Peter, Joel Dee (who became an actor as Jody McCrea) and David.



Monologuist Spalding Gray poses in his New York apartment in this Dec. 3, 1996 file photo.
AP

Ashley Judd with a twist

By MICHAEL Sragow
THE BALTIMORE SUN

Ashley Judd has the face that launched a thousand conventional women-in-jeopardy movies—not just her own, which usually depend on Judd's push and drive for their ratcheting momentum, but the rip-offs on TV, often on the Lifetime Channel.

The genre as we now know it belongs to her; she and her writers and directors propelled it in liberating directions. A Judd suspense film like "Double Jeopardy" (1999), in which a foul husband sets up his wife for a fake murder, doesn't just reverse the moral and sexual dynamics of hard-shelled Hollywood melodramas about a femme fatale and a male sucker ("Double Indemnity" is the towering prototype). It also makes the duped character virtuous and tough enough to achieve a healthy payback and emerge without scars.

At age 35, Judd has come a long way from "Ruby in Paradise" (1993), her breakthrough role as a Tennessee girl gaining self-knowledge through trial and error in a West Florida town. She's transformed herself into a mainstream action heroine and a jack of all performing trades, recently switching off between movies and the Broadway stage, where her presence as Maggie the Cat, despite grudging reviews, turned a revival of Tennessee Williams' "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" into a hit.

In her latest movie, "Twisted," which is now playing in theaters but got lost amid the walk-up to the Oscars and the opening of "The Passion of the Christ," she plays a San Francisco cop newly elevated to the homicide division. She sports a short-and-spiky-hairdo—something she developed with her director, Philip Kaufman, for what he calls that "pop-out-of-bed" look. Even for an actress who's no shrinking violent, she's more aggressive than usual, with a temper that flares up in an instant and wreaks havoc in seconds. And she has an upfront sexuality that topples male expectations, whether those of her guardian and police mentor (Samuel L. Jackson) or her homicide division partner (Andy Garcia).

Before working with Judd on this movie, Kaufman suggested she watch "a lot of Steve McQueen films." After all, the prototype for modern San Francisco movie cops was not Eastwood's Dirty Harry but McQueen's Bullitt. "Even the car she drives," Kaufman says, on the phone from San Francisco, "is either Steve McQueen's car or a duplicate of the Mustang he drives in Bullitt."

More important, "McQueen had an energy and efficiency in his movements—just in the way he would pick up his frozen dinners and take the paper out

Facts and figures on Ashley Judd

Born: April 19, 1968, Granada Hills, Calif.

Family: Daughter of Naomi and sister of Wynonna Judd, singers. Married to race-car driver Dario Franchitti.

Education: Attended 12 schools in 13 years as family moved from California to Tennessee and Kentucky. Graduated Phi Beta Kappa, University of Kentucky, 1990.

Awards: Most Promising Actress, Chicago Film Critics Association, and Best Female Lead, Independent Spirit Award, for "Ruby in Paradise" (1993); Favorite Actress, Blockbuster Entertainment Award, for "Double Jeopardy" (2000).

Box office: A sampling -- "Ruby in Paradise," \$1,001,437; "Kiss the Girls" (1997), \$60,491,560; "Double Jeopardy," \$116,735,231. (*The Baltimore Sun*)



of the news rack. And Ashley does, too: She has this confident physicality."

When I interviewed Judd by phone two Fridays before the movie's opening last month, she was McQueenesque—driving herself through Manhattan gridlock to have a pre-show dinner with director Anthony Page, who guided her through "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof." Four days after our talk, she tore some ligaments and sprained her foot on-stage; she tried to soldier on, but had to leave the play on Feb. 22, three weeks before the end of her scheduled run.

Reassuring me that her cell phone was attached to a headset, Judd shrugged off my surprise that she would agree to be interviewed while driving to dinner and a demanding performance; after all, she's been married to race-car driver Dario Franchitti since 2001. Between bouts of outrage at backed-up intersections, she displayed the smarts that earned her Phi Beta Kappa at the University of Kentucky.

She took the lead in "Twisted," Judd says, because "Sara Thorp's script presented me with a somewhat unprecedented character." She becomes "her own best suspect" because she's had a series of one-night-stands with men who end up dead. "In terms of gender stereotypes," continues Judd, "she's as 'male' as she is 'female,' and she's unapologetic about it."

That mix is what attracted her. Old Hollywood would have advertised "Twisted" with the slogan "Ashley Judd as you've never seen her before!" Of course, audiences would have known in those days that they'd get Judd as they had seen her

before, but with some delectable new twists. Male and female audiences enjoy seeing Judd race through movies like "Kiss the Girls" (1997) and "High Crimes" (2002), getting physical while parading her characters' expertise in medicine and law, respectively. She's not a superwoman but she is a take-charge woman, with all her faculties keenly tuned.

And she has an innate classiness that transcends social class. A childhood that encompassed 12 schools in 13 years in California and Kentucky, with patches of

CUC MEET

CDA

Sexual fantasy fulfilled turns out to be nightmare

By Abigail Van Buren

DEAR ABBY: I have heard many men fantasize about hooking up with a nymphomaniac. Speaking as someone with 20/20 hindsight, I advise any man who meets one to run!

I was married to a woman with that problem, and at first I did think I was in heaven. I didn't learn about the downside until much later.

Every day after I left for work, another man spent the day with my wife. And when I went into the military, she disappeared. I later learned that she was frequenting bars, having encounters with anyone and everyone who would, and contracting multiple STDs in the process. At the time I was very angry at her. I now realize she was driven by an addiction over which she had no control.

So, unless you are prepared to spend every minute of every day with a nymphomaniac, expect to share—with the world.



Dear Abby

OLDER AND WISER

DEAR OLDER AND WISER: As your letter proves, sometimes there CAN be too much of a good thing. What's the old saying, "Moderation in all things"? It's true.

□ □ □ □

DEAR ABBY: My daughter, "Kim," is in grade school. She's an only child, and ever since she was little, I have invited kids over so she'd have someone to play with. Most of their parents promise they'll have Kim over for a play-date at their house "soon," but soon never seems to come.

Kim is nice to her classmates and well-behaved in school. Her friends' parents always tell me what a great time their kids have at our house.

Kim never says anything about not being invited to the homes of other children, but I'm starting to feel like a free baby-sitting service.

What should I do the next time a parent says, "Let's get the kids to play together over vacation or the weekend"?

EVERYONE'S BABY SITTER

DEAR BABY SITTER: Say this: "That's a wonderful idea. Can we do it at your house? I have some things I have to take care of at that time, and your supervising the children would really help me out."

□ □ □ □

DEAR ABBY: I am a 15-year-old high school freshman. English is my second language. I was in ESL during junior high school. I not only learned enough English to go into mainstream, but I also have college-prep classes in which I am quite good.

My history teacher told me about a program called "Upward Bound" that holds classes on Saturdays and is very promising. I didn't think my English was good enough, but I applied and was accepted. Now I am afraid to go. I'm worried that people will judge me because of my Colombian accent.

I have received much advice about this issue, but I still need more. Perhaps you will help me.

WORRIED ABOUT COLOMBIAN ACCENT

DEAR WORRIED: Go to the class! You were accepted, so for heaven's sake, take advantage of the opportunity. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain. Should anyone be rude enough to comment on your accent, sweetly ask him or her how he or she would do taking classes in YOUR native language.

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Write Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

For everything you need to know about wedding planning, order "How to Have a Lovely Wedding." Send a business-size, self-addressed envelope, plus check or money order for \$5 (U.S. funds only) to: Dear Abby, Wedding Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Postage is included.)

Expect less sex in syndicated 'Sex'

ASPEN, Colo. (AP)—Expect less sex in the syndicated version of HBO's "Sex and the City." "We joke there will be no Samantha" after the censors have their way, writer Cindy Chupak said of the sexually voracious character played by Kim Cattrall—who settled down with one man and found love by the series' end.

Syndication pleases star Sarah Jessica Parker, even if the shows

are toned down for a broader audience. After six seasons, the last new episode aired Feb. 22.

"I am not sad about a larger audience," Parker, who played columnist Carrie Bradshaw, said Friday at the U.S. Comedy Arts Festival. "Part of me is happy that people who could not afford HBO" will now have the opportunity to meet the four women whose love lives were

chronicled on the show.

Parker, executive producer Michael Patrick King, Chupak and the show's five other writers appeared at the comedy festival, which ended Sunday.

The writers, all women, described how their real-life experiences made their way into the scripts. In the sanctity of the writers' room, they discussed their dates and relationships.

"Very often that bleeds into story building," said writer Elisa Zuritsky.

Some of the writers said they share the characters' love of expensive shoes. Amy B. Harris acknowledged she has 50 to 75 pairs; Jenny Bicks' collection consists of about 30 pairs.

And Parker's shoe wardrobe? "I can't talk about it," she said with a laugh.

Sting, Lennox talk about summer tour

NEW YORK (AP)—Old friends Annie Lennox and Sting have different recollections of when they first met. While the 52-year-old Sting recalls meeting the songstress at the BBC television network more than 20 years ago, Lennox remembers a different scenario.

"Someone approached me and said, 'Sting would like to have to have his picture taken with you,'" Lennox told The Associated Press. "I felt really funny because at that time, he was the megagod that he still is, and I was like this aspiring thing."

When Lennox tried to prod his memory, Sting mumbled, "I don't remember."

"You see, how nothing I was!" Lennox, 49, laughed.

The pair will have plenty of time to reminisce as they tour together for the first time this summer. The "Sacred Love" tour, which kicks off June 27 in Philadelphia, will end in Canada on Oct. 12.

In an exclusive joint phone interview with the AP on Friday, Lennox and Sting said they hadn't decided on how the tour will develop, or whether they'll sing together—but said they're happy to be performing on the same show.

"I actually think that camaraderie and friendship is actually essential and it has to run from the bottom to the top," Lennox said.

"For me, it's creating one show out of what would normally be two shows," Sting said. "It's our stage, and I want people to go away thinking, 'That was the best show that I ever saw.'"

The pair sang each other's praises, recalled old times and talked as if they hadn't seen each other in some time, when they'd actually been at the same event last month, as competitors at the Academy Awards.

Both were nominated for the best song Oscar—Lennox for co-writing "Into the West" from "The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King" and Sting for writing "You Will Be My Ain True Love" from "Cold Mountain."

Lennox won the Oscar, one of 11 awards "The Return of the King" won that night, including best picture.

"It was like popping champagne bottles every five seconds," Lennox said of the evening.

"I was having the opposite reaction," Sting jokingly grouched.

Ben Stiller glad to play Starsky



Actors Owen Wilson, left, and Ben Stiller, co-stars in the upcoming film "Starsky and Hutch," pose together at the Four Seasons Hotel in Los Angeles, Feb. 24, 2004. AP

Bowie says he's experimenting again

TOKYO (AP)—David Bowie, pushing 60, says he's headed for another experimental phase. Speaking in Tokyo to start this week's Japan leg of his world tour, Bowie said he's stripping down his act to try out some new approaches.

"I'm heading for another period of experimentation," he said. "(I'm at) a time when I'm collecting myself before I break all my own rules."

The iconic artist has gone

through various personas during his more than three-decade career - Ziggy Stardust, The Thin White Duke, Philadelphia soul man, avant-garde rocker.

Now, he said, he wants to focus on his songwriting and singing.

"It's probably the simplest tour that I've ever done," he said, dressed in gray cargo pants and a hooded sweatshirt. "This is very stripped down. It's really not working with theatrics at all."

'Idol' reject William Hung has recording deal

NEW YORK (AP)—Who needs "American Idol"? William Hung doesn't—he already has a recording contract.

The singer, who became a fan favorite—but not a judges' favorite—during open auditions for the Fox series with his spirited version of Ricky Martin's "She Bangs," has signed a deal with Fuse Music Network and Koch Records.

His debut album, tentatively titled "The True Idol," is sched-



Hung

uled for release April 6, it was announced Monday. It will contain "She Bangs," along with another Martin hit, "Shake Your Bon Bon," and a cover of Elton John's "Rocket Man," which Hung sang recently on "The Ellen DeGeneres Show."

And for those of you hankering for more Hung, the disc will include a 40-minute DVD with behind-the-scenes footage from his studio recording sessions and fan questions and answers.

"He may not be the next American Idol, but he is definitely a star and inspiration to everyone who sings in the shower," said Marc Juris, president of Fuse, which will exclusively air his "She Bangs" video.

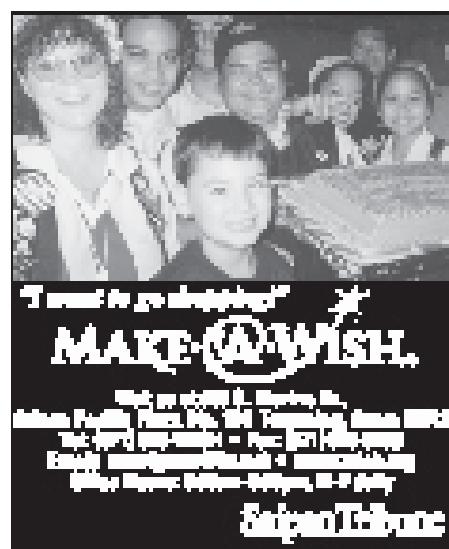
Koch Records general manager Alan Grunblatt was even more effusive: "He is the new Elvis!"

Hung, a 21-year-old Hong Kong native and civil engineering student at the University of California, Berkeley, has inspired fan clubs and Web sites that sing his praises.

Pastimes

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer



ziggy®

STUMPED?

For answers to today's crossword, call 1-800-226-5955! 10¢ per minute, local to 100+ cities. (16¢ early & long distance service, NYL.)

By Bill Waterson

Calvin and Hobbes

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY

Justin Jeffre, Sean Astin, Lesley Boone, Sally Jessy Raphael

HAPPY BIRTHDAY: Having a crusader attitude will make all the difference in the world this year. Be a little stubborn if you think you are right. Be diverse in all that you do and you will meet the demands being put on you and accomplish your goals. Your numbers are 2, 13, 17, 29, 31, 40

EUGENIA LAST
THE LAST WORD
IN ASTROLOGY



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ARIES (March 21-April 19)

Push to make others aware of what you are doing and how you believe it will help everyone on some level. If you can sell your ideas to others, you will put yourself in a favorable position. ☐☐☐



TAURUS (April 20-May 20)

This is a perfect day to make some much-needed adjustments. Opportunities will manifest themselves in the most unusual places, so don't hesitate to talk about your dreams. ☐☐☐



GEMINI (May 21-June 20)

Keeping a secret will be of utmost importance today. By disclosing what you are up to, you could blow a deal or your cover. Work by yourself; question your motives. ☐☐☐



CANCER (June 21-July 22)

Do something creative today that can be used to benefit others. The more you do to help make reforms, the better. ☐☐☐



LEO (July 23-Aug. 22)

You will be misled if you are too gregarious. Tone down and observe what others are doing. Advancement may be at stake. ☐☐



VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22)

You can find an ideal romantic partner if you get out and do things that interest you. Get involved in talks that will stimulate your mind and broaden your perspective about projects you want to pursue. ☐☐☐☐



LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22)

Prepare yourself well so that you can follow through with what's necessary as quickly as possible. Don't be lazy or waste time thinking about what you should be doing. ☐☐☐



SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21)

Partnerships will be a little hard to handle if you don't take precautions and fully prepare. You can get on with your plans and get the praise you deserve. ☐☐☐



SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21)

Your work ethics will pay off, so roll up your sleeves and work alongside others for best results. Your team-player approach will put you in a leadership position. ☐☐☐



CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19)

You should be developing your ideas today. If you find someone particularly inspiring, spend time discussing your plans together. Love and romance will be on your doorstep. ☐☐☐



AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18)

Take the initiative to follow what you feel is the best path and refrain from being led astray. Prepare to take a pass on what others are asking of you. ☐☐



PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20)

Your involvement in good causes will be rewarded today. You will begin to see the results of a job well done. Someone unusual, but interesting, will want to get to know you better. ☐☐☐

BIRTHDAY BABY: You are proactive and never take the conventional route. Your outgoing nature always leads to adventure and excitement. You will chase your dreams until you reach your destiny.

Check out Eugenia's Web sites at astroadvice.com and eugenialast.com.

Garfield®

By Jim Davis

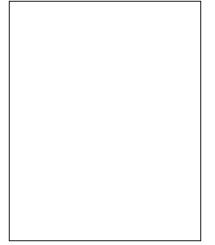
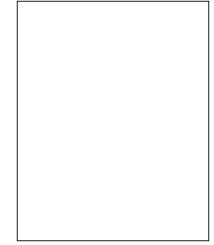
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By Bryan Basset

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